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CZAR DECIDES ON PEACE OR WAR FOR RUSSIA

Is Absolute In Such Matters
 Though He Advised With
 His Ministers.

AUTOCRACY NOT CURTAILED

He Has Been His Own Premier and
 the Task Has Been Beyond His
 Powers—Influence of Gregory
 Rasputin, the Lay Brother.

The czar ordered mobilization after advising with his ministers. It would have been impossible to convene the representative bodies, the duma and the imperial council, in order to hear from them and expression of opinion within the short term allowed for the decision, writes Samuel N. Harper in the Chicago Herald.

But such a step was probably not even thought of or considered. Under the fundamental laws, the Russian constitution, war is declared and peace signed by the sovereign; the czar is the commander in chief of Russia's armed forces. The autocratic authority was not curtailed on these matters by the political reforms of 1905, which gave Russia the duma.

The duma votes the yearly conscription and the appropriations for the army and navy. Through the control over the budget it has insisted on and obtained reform and reorganization in these departments. The work of the third duma will be more highly estimated when the result of its efforts in this field become clear. The duma gave particular attention to the problem of re-establishing the shattered army. Here it effected real progress, although this was necessarily done without much blowing of trumpets.

Czar Directs Foreign Policy.
 The czar directs Russia's foreign policy. Each year his minister of foreign affairs reports to the duma on the state of Russia's relation with other powers. The minister always prefaces the speech with the remark that he has received the authority of the sovereign to make his statement. The prerogative of the czar in matters of foreign relations is thus established and carefully observed. The duma debates on this report are, however, always frank and critical. Such a debate took place only a few months ago. The present crisis was not anticipated, of course.

But opinions of the various parties on the questions now at issue were then voiced. The czar is reported to have read the Duma Record with great care; he has said himself that he follows the work of the duma with great interest. He knew what attitude the party leaders had taken of the question of Russian policy in the near East; but it was by his own authority that the czar took the decision that has led to war.

In foreign affairs the czar has always exercised his prerogative freely. The present foreign minister, Mr. Sazonov, is a man of considerable ability, a conscientious and able diplomat. But he has been in poor health; frequently he has had to take long releases from duty. This has meant that the sovereign has exercised an even greater and more personal control over questions of foreign policy.

Is His Own Prime Minister.
 The czar has been his own prime minister for over three years. He has been taking the reins of government more and more into his own hands, allowing his ministers to advise and suggest, but reserving to himself actual decision and giving them only provisional directions, with instructions to report and then receive further orders.

Apart from all question of a particular personality, the task assumed by the czar has been beyond his powers. More important, however, than this, the absence of an actual head to the cabinet has opened a wide field to personal recriminations among the various ministers. These countercharges have been made to the ear of the sovereign.

This was a source of danger, an element of demoralization in the government. But it led to a most important result, though it took some time for the result to come. The czar learned that conditions in the country were not what he had been induced to believe them to be; he became aware of the extent of the unrest and of some of the causes back of the discontent. The czar became worried.

Rasputin, the Monk.
 The czar tried to get other points of view. He realized that he had been considerably isolated. Much has been written about a certain lay brother, the monk Gregory Rasputin. He has been at the court for some years, as a kind of spiritual adviser. He is undoubtedly a fraud in many respects; but one must recognize in him a quick and keen mind. He is of peasant origin.

It is asserted that he was in some measure responsible for the imperial decree of last March, in which the czar condemned the Rasputin policy so long in force in Russia, which owed its success to an increasing consump-

an enormous influence in the peasant villages. One could say: The czar has close to him a peasant, a man of the people, with whom he takes counsel. If Rasputin did have a share in counseling this decree, this is about the only act of his that deserves commendation.

Rasputin has been an important influence in Russian politics. He represents an interesting fact. The prerogative of the Russian czar has been to secure his advice from unofficial as well as official counselors. The constant recourse to unofficial advisers, especially since the more definite organization of a cabinet of ministers, would seem to be on the authority of the sovereign himself.

The present czar has been calling in outsiders to a very large measure, perhaps with this very idea in mind. He has done this especially since he assumed more control over the details of administration, since he has in fact tried to be his own prime minister. But he has shown poor judgment in his choice of advisers.

Has Had Difficult Reign.
 The present czar has had a difficult reign. It started most inauspiciously with the frightful accident that attended his coronation. Through the carelessness of his officials hundreds of peasants and workmen who flocked to celebrate the occasion were crushed to death on the field where they were gathered to receive the gifts that were to be distributed.

At the very beginning of his reign he antagonized a large section of his people. Members of local provincial councils petitioned that provision be made by which the voice of the people could more surely reach the sovereign, shut in as they believed him to be by a wall of bureaucrats. They were told, when their delegation received a personal reception by the czar, to drop these "senseless dreams."

Some persons seem to have the faculty of needlessly antagonizing. In many cases an extreme timidity would seem to account for what appears to be futile tactlessness. The present czar is very timid and diffident. He always reads from notes when he has to make an important pronouncement.

Careful With His Manifestos.
 The czar's manifestos are always carefully prepared official documents. They show the penmanship of the chancellery. And as he has been noted, the czar has seldom made a spontaneous utterance of important political content. His speeches are written out and read by him with the paper in hand. But one document has come down to the student of Russian history which gives valuable material on this question of the personality and character of the czar.

In 1905, after the czar had promised to institute a duma, he called a conference at the palace, to which he invited not only his ministers, but members of the imperial family, members of the imperial council—then a consultative body—and several outsiders, including the great Russian historian, Klyuchevsky. The czar presided over the meetings of this conference in person.

The conference was secret, but a stenographic report of the discussions was made and printed, and distributed to the members. At last one member was indiscreet, and a copy of this report got into the hands of a German publisher. The document is now accessible to the public.

Showed Keen Insight.
 The czar asked the members of the conference to speak out their minds without reserve, and they did so. The most important point of discussion was how to organize the new duma in such a way as not to limit the authority of the autocratic sovereign.

At that moment it was intended that the duma have only a consultative voice in legislation. The czar listened to the various opinions expressed, as point after point was discussed, and often by a single word determined which view should prevail. Only at one time did he make a statement of any length, and that speech was extremely short. His judgment in deciding which view on a given point should become law showed a keener insight into problems of statesmanship than he has generally been credited with abroad. But the initiative did not come from him.

France an Apt Pupil With Germany Tutor

France learned well the lesson Germany taught her in 1870, when within seven months from the opening of hostilities Paris had fallen and France was a suppliant for mercy at the throne of the German emperor.

—IN 1870— —IN 1914—

On the night of July 19, 1870, an ambassador at St. Petersburg awoke at 7:30 p. m. August 1, hand Moltke, chief of ed to the Russian the German im- minister of foreign perial war staff, affairs a declara- tion of war. When poleon III had de- lated the council of min- lers in Paris the same evening was Moltke directed informed that Ger- the orderly to many had declared the second war against Russia drawer on the they met President left hand side of Polcare hurriedly his desk for com- ace. It was an- to mobilize the nounced at once German armies. Then he went to tion of the mobiliza- sleep again. army would begin When he arose at midnight and troops had been would be complet-

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